

AMPLIFIER CIRCUIT WITH A SHARED CURRENT SOURCE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to an amplifier circuit with a shared current source, in particular to an amplifier circuit with multiple cascaded stages of amplifiers that share a common current source to reduce power dissipation.

2. Description of Related Arts

In general, amplifiers may have a gain stage and an output stage. However, the driving capability of the gain stage is usually not enough to meet high power requirements, and a Class A amplifier usually needs an output stage to boost the output power when the amplifier is linked to a large load. Class A amplifiers can be further divided into a source type or a sink type.

With reference to Figs. 7 and 8, source type and sink type Class A amplifiers have a gain stage (51) and an output stage (52). The main distinction between these two types of amplifiers is that the source type can provide large current output to back-end circuits, whereas the sink type takes in current. The output stage in both types of amplifiers needs a current source (53) to drive the current output. When the source type amplifier is not active, the source circuit still draws substantial electrical energy from the current source (53). To improve the operation efficiency of the amplifier and to remove noise in the circuits, the current source (53) in a source type amplifier is usually designed with high current output, hence the power dissipation is even greater.

In certain drive circuits (such as LCD devices), incorporating both a source type and a sink type amplifier side by side is necessary. The common

1 practice is to put these two types of amplifier circuits in independently. When
2 these two amplifier circuits are not active, their total power dissipation is twice
3 that of a shared current source (53) since each circuit has its own current source.
4 Therefore the amplifier circuit design needs to be improved to meet the
5 increasing demand to save power.

6 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

7 The present invention provides an amplifier circuit that shares a common
8 drive current by installing a single current source between two source type
9 amplifiers to reduce their power dissipation.

10 To this end, the amplifier circuit includes a first amplifier and a second
11 amplifier, and both have a gain stage and an output stage. The output stage of the
12 first amplifier is coupled to a current source, and the second amplifier is cascaded
13 onto the first amplifier with the current source being coupled to the output stage
14 of the second amplifier. Therefore, both amplifiers share a common current
15 source.

16 The common current source can be built with a current mirror circuit
17 formed by either PMOS transistors or NMOS transistors.

18 The first amplifier can be either a Class A amplifier, Class B amplifier or
19 a Class AB amplifier type.

20 The second amplifier can be either a Class A amplifier, Class B amplifier
21 or a Class AB amplifier type.

22 The features and structure of the present invention will be more clearly
23 understood when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

24 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

1 Fig. 1 is a schematic diagram of an amplifier circuit with a shared current
2 source in accordance with the present invention;

3 Fig. 2 is a schematic diagram of one implementation of the shared
4 current source in an amplifier circuit with a shared current source;

5 Fig. 3 is a schematic diagram of another implementation of the shared
6 current source in another preferred embodiment of an amplifier circuit with a
7 shared current source in accordance with the present invention;

8 Fig. 4 is a schematic diagram of another preferred embodiment of the
9 shared current source in an amplifier circuit with a shared current source in
10 accordance with the present invention;

11 Fig. 5 is a schematic diagram of still another preferred embodiment an
12 amplifier circuit with a shared current source in accordance with the present
13 invention;

14 Fig. 6 is a detailed circuit diagram of the amplifier circuit in fig. 5;

15 Fig. 7 is a schematic diagram of a conventional Class A amplifier (source
16 type); and

17 Fig. 8 is a schematic diagram of a conventional Class A amplifier (sink
18 type).

19 DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

20 With reference to Fig. 1, a first preferred embodiment of an amplifier
21 circuit with a shared current source in accordance with the present invention
22 comprises a first amplifier (10), a second amplifier (20) and a current source (30).

23 The first amplifier(10) is a source type Class A amplifier and has an
24 output node (V1), a gain stage (11) and an output stage (12). The second

1 amplifier (20) is a sink type Class A amplifier and has an output node (V2) , a
2 gain stage (21) and an output stage (22).

3 The current source (30) is coupled between the first and second
4 amplifiers (10, 20) and simultaneously provides a drive current for the first
5 amplifier (10) and the second amplifier (20).

6 When the first and second amplifiers (10) (20) are not in active mode,
7 their power dissipation as a result of the shared current source design is only that
8 of a single current source (30). Consequently, a 50% power saving is realized
9 when compared to conventional techniques.

10 With reference to Figs. 2 and 3, the shared current source (30) is
11 implemented by installing a current mirror circuit between the first and second
12 amplifiers (10, 20). The current mirror circuit can be built with two PMOS or
13 NMOS transistors (not numbered). Each current mirror utilizes a base current
14 (I_{base}) on the current input side (not numbered). Through appropriate control of a
15 current ratio (1:N) between the two transistors, making the current flow (I_{bias}) on
16 the output side (not numbered) N times larger than the base current (I_{base}) is
17 possible, that is $I_{bias}=N \times I_{base}$. This bias current (I_{bias}) is shared by the first and
18 second amplifiers (10, 20).

19 With reference to Fig. 4, the amplifier circuit with a shared current
20 source in accordance with the present invention is not only applicable to
21 cascading of Class A amplifiers, but also to Class B amplifiers, Class AB
22 amplifiers or a combination of these amplifiers. The first and second amplifiers
23 (10, 20) in this embodiment can be all Class B amplifiers or Class AB amplifiers
24 (their circuits are identical). The drive current for the output stage (12) of the first

1 amplifier (10) comes from the operation voltage (V_{DD}), and the drive current (I_{bias})
2 for the output stage (22) of the second amplifier (20) comes from the output
3 current (I_{O1}) of the first amplifier(10), without using any additional operation
4 voltage (V_{DD}).

5 With reference to Figs. 5 and 6, another embodiment of the amplifier
6 circuit with a shared current source in accordance with the present invention has
7 a Class A amplifier driving circuit combinable with a Class B amplifier (A+B) or
8 a Class AB amplifier (A+AB). This is distinguished from the previous
9 embodiments in that a shared current source (30) is installed in between the
10 output nodes (V1, V2) of the first and second amplifiers (10, 20).

11 That the present invention can be used to construct an amplifier circuit
12 with two amplifiers in cascade without having to set aside respective current
13 sources independently is apparent. Therefore the power dissipated from these
14 cascaded amplifiers when not in the active mode is only half of that using
15 independent current sources. Besides the power saving, circuit layout of the
16 present invention is simpler than the conventional techniques.

17 The foregoing description of the preferred embodiments of the present
18 invention is intended to be illustrative only and, under no circumstances, should
19 the scope of the present invention be so restricted